

THE
Chap-Book
SEMI-MONTHLY

Contents for May 1, 1895.

SONNET

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SONNET.



NEW Narcissus, gazing in your eyes
I, shadowed by the flowering of your hair
Behold my own face fondly nestling there
As though within the fold of Paradise.
My soul, it seems, ascended to the skies
Away from flesh, into a purer air;
Joyous to find himself enclosed where
No taint of any earthly evil lies.
And I, bewildered by the aspect new,
And half-enamoured of the changeling elf
Forgot it owes its value all to you.
For having taken it, a shapeless clod,
To the transparent treasures of yourself,
You give it its primeval form of God.

HUGH McCULLOCH, JR.

SCENES IN THE VOSHTI HILLS

II

THE SINGING OF THE BEES



OTHER, did 'st thou not say thy prayers last night?"

"Twice, my child."

"Once before the little shrine, and once beside my bed,—is it not so?"

"It is so, my Fanchon. What hast thou in thy mind?"

"Thou did 'st pray that the storm die in the hills, and the flood cease, and that my father come before it was again the hour of prayer. It is now the hour. Can 'st thou not hear the storm and the wash of the flood? And my father does not come!"

"My Fanchon, God is good."

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"When thou wast asleep, I rose from my bed, and in the dark I kissed the feet of—Him—on the little Calvary, and I did not speak, but in my heart I called."

"What did'st thou call, my child?"

"I called to my father,—'Come back! come back!'"

"Thou should'st have called to God, my Fanchon."

"I loved my father, and I called to him."

"Thou should'st love God."

"I knew my father first. If God loved thee, He would answer thy prayer. Dost thou not hear the cracking of the cedar trees, and the cry of the wolves—they are afraid? All day and all night the rain and wind come down, and the birds and wild fowl have no peace. I kissed—His feet, and my throat was full of tears, but I called in my heart. Yet the storm and the dark stay, and my father does not come."

"Let us be patient, my Fanchon."

"He went to guide the priest across the hills. Why does not God guide him back?"

"My Fanchon, let us be patient."

"The priest was young, and my father has grey hair."

"Wilt thou not be patient, my child?"

"He filled the knapsack of the priest with food better than his own, and—thou did'st not see it—put money in his hand."

"My own, the storm may pass."

"He told the priest to think upon our home as a little nest God set up here for such as he."

"There are places of shelter in the hills for thy father, my Fanchon."

"And when the priest prayed, 'That Thou may'st bring us safely to this place where we would go,' my father said so softly, '*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!*'"

"My Fanchon, thy father hath gone this trail many times."

"The prayer was for the out-trail, not the in-trail, my mother."

"Nay, I do not understand thee."

"A swarm of bees came singing through the room last night, my mother. It was dark and I could not see, but there was a sweet smell, and I heard the voices."

"My child, thou art tired with watching, and thy mind is full of fancies. Thou must sleep."

"I am tired of watching. Through the singing of the bees as they passed over my bed, I heard my father's voice. I could not hear the words, they seemed so far away, like the voices of the bees, and I did not cry out, for the tears were in my throat. After a moment the room was so still that it made my heart ache."

"Oh, my Fanchon, my child, thou dost break my heart! Dost thou not know the holy words?—

"And their souls do pass like singing bees, where no man may follow. These are they whom God gathereth out of the whirlwind and the desert, and bringeth home in a goodly swarm."

Night drew close to the earth, and as suddenly as a sluice-gate drops and holds back a flood, the storm ceased. Along the crest of the hills there slowly grew a line of light, and then the serene moon came up and on, persistent to give the earth love where it had had punishment. And divers flocks of clouds, camp-followers of the storm, could not abash her. But once she drew shrinking back behind a slow troop of them, for down at the bottom of a gorge lay a mountaineer, face upward and unmoving, as he had lain since a rock loosened beneath him, and the depths swallowed him. If he had had ears to hear, he would have answered the soft bitter cry which rose from a hut on Voshti Hill above him—

"Michel, Michel, art thou gone!"

"Come back, oh, my father, come back!"

But perhaps it did avail that there were lighted candles
before a little shrine, and that a mother, in her darkness,
kissed the feet of One on a Calvary.

GILBERT PARKER.

WERE-WOLF

RUNS the wind along the waste,
Run the clouds across the moon,
Ghastly shadows run in haste
From snowy dune to dune—
Blue shadows o'er the ghastly white
Spectral gleaming in the night.
But ghastlier, more spectral still,
What fearful thing speeds hither,
Running, running, running
Swifter than cloud or wind?
What omen of nameless ill,
Whence coming, speeding whither,
Running, running, running,
Leaves all save fear behind?

Leaning, leaning in the race,
Breath keen-drawn through nostrils tense,
Fell eyes in ruthless face,
What goblin of malevolence
Runs through the frozen night
In superhuman flight?
See it run, run, run,
Outstripping the shadows that fly!
Hear the fiend's heart beat, beat,
Beat, beat, beat in its breast!
Running, running, running on

Under the frozen sky,
Fleet, so fearfully fleet,
Pausing never to rest.
Clutched—what is clutched so tight
In its lean, cold hands as it speeds?
Something soft, something white,
Something human, that bleeds?
Is it an infant's curly head,
And innocent limbs, gnawed and red?
Fleeter and yet more fleet
It leans, leans and runs;
Dabbled with blood are its awful lips,
Grinning in horrible glee.
The wolves that follow with scurrying feet,
Sniffing that goblin scent, at once
Scatter in terror, while it slips
Away, to the shore of the frozen sea.

Away! is it man? is it woman,
On such dread meat to feed?
Away! is it beast? is it human?
Or is it a fiend indeed?
Fiend from human loins begotten,
Hell-inspired, God-Forgotten!
Now the midnight hour draws on:
Human form no fiend may keep
Or ever that mystic hour is told.
Lower, lower, lower it bends.
Midnight is come—is come and gone!
Down on all fours see it plunge and leap!
A human yell in a wolf's howl ends! * * *
What gaunt, grey thing gallops on o'er the wold?

JULIAN HAWTHORNE.



JOAQUIN MILLER AT HOME
DRAWING BY FRED. RICHARDSON

NUTS FROM PERIGORD.

IF you have ever read Joubert, and if you have not you had better go do it, you will remember what he says about a certain phosphor for one's eyes, a certain nectar for one's taste and a certain ambrosia for one's understanding in the words employed by the true poet. He might have turned a kindred thought, with the same beautiful spiral motion, around the diction of the true essayist, which must twinkle almost jocundly, yet be as firm as crystal and as fluent as a beck.

Joubert himself might have been a great essayist if he had not so annoyingly preferred doing nothing beyond serving up in broken doses dainty preparations of philosophy and criticism drawled with the indolent accent of a dilettanteism peculiarly French. I enjoy reading him along with Montaigne; it is much like eating a *sauce piquante* with rich old nut-kernels that have been long dried in a garret. They are both true Gascons and agreeably entertaining when others with their opportunities would, like Voltaire for example, be supercilious and full of treacheries.

And speaking of delectable nuts in connection with Montaigne, I suspect that the comparison first arose in my mind under a hickory tree on a grassy hill-side overlooking a long and wide blue sweep of the Ohio River. There was a stone fence near by, and beyond the water some purple mountains in Kentucky curved round a segment of the horizon like a mighty jaw set with teeth of amethyst. A July sun flared at the noon mark almost plumb overhead and I lay reading under the spreading boughs of a *carya* of the shell-bark species which had grown apart from other trees and spread out squat and sturdy in the freedom of isolation.

Against the bole of this tree there leaned a gray, barkless remnant of a fallen bough, a stout piece, weather-washed and pitted with tentative woodpecker borings. It happened to

be in my way as I lounged, so I pushed it; and falling heavily it burst open, letting roll forth from a capacious hollow in it a half-gallon of hickory-nuts. Long ago, how many years would be mere conjecture, a squirrel had stored his gatherings there, probably before the bough fell off the tree, and the desiccated nuts now offered themselves to me.

A little girl was my companion at the time; she was just of the age to appreciate such a find, especially when I had fetched two stones from the fence to serve as anvil and hammer, so that she could crack away while I went on with Montaigne. And now and again in the midst of the wise sayings and showers of quotations, a little brown hand put a sear kernel into my mouth. It was like chewing a tasteless shard at first; but presently the sweet, and yet a trifle rancid, oil began to declare itself to my tongue. The hickory flavor and savor had not been lost by the drying process, but (concentrated and curiously strengthened) came out with a tang of age indescribably grateful.

This toothsome-ness belongs I think to Montaigne's essays. The indestructibility, which manifests itself deep in their structure, seems to me primitively unctious and just a bit rank, altogether like what old nuts secrete at their best and release only when they must. Chip-like in the beginning, the characteristics are not foremost in their style; but wait, read on, and before you know it you are imbued with a crude yet inimitable influence. This is style indeed, not diction, not rhetoric; it is (to be French to a Frenchman) *l'homme même* without reserve.

Montaigne is light enough, keeps well out of reach of his subject when he cares to, chases butterflies just at the moment when you most desire that he shall take the bull by the horns, all to such purpose that he is delightfully entertaining; sometimes you scarcely know how. Always, however, if you will think of it his phrases have the nutty quality which leaves in

your mind a taste of something cured by evaporation and preserved in its own essentials. Even his humor partakes of the slumbrous up-in-the-attic, out-of-fashion spirit which is fully understood by none but provincials. And Montaigne was out of fashion in his own day, as Joubert was in his, and Emerson in his. The curious inscriptions at the country seat of Montaigne, those on the trees where Joubert lingered and Emerson's jerky notes scratched down as the thoughts occurred and afterwards flung together to be called a lecture or essay, all have this in common; their gist is an elemental characteristic of genius working in isolation.

Emerson is the man of a single sentence, Joubert of the single paragraph, Montaigne of the essay; for you may cover up almost any space between punctuation marks on Emerson's page and read right past the obstruction as well as if it were not there; while Joubert holds you down to every word in one of his *pensées* and Montaigne button-holes you along from page to page until you stumble over the last phrase, not expecting the end.

The structure of the essay is what Montaigne intuitively understood. His manner of putting things together resulted in a careless symmetry which has the outlines of happy accident; it seems mere coincidence by chance when the parts fall together and fit so well. A good deal of downright pedantry and book-dust go long with the numerous quotations; but what critic will point out how to do without them? Bereft of these Montaigne's work would be like Deacon Snowball's "pretty little pearl-handled knife without the handle"; a large fascination would be gone from many a page; as well rob a clover field of its bees as to stop the humming of the Latin poets among the old essayist's nectaries.

When Joubert observed that "to write well calls for natural facility and acquired difficulty" he unwittingly sketched Montaigne's recipe. Verbal readiness and elasticity of

phrasing go for much in the essays; but the half-hidden artistic difficulty of construction is the richer element of their attractiveness. Hard work and conscientious cutting and fitting have made easy reading out of some very refractory material, and the rhythm of mere poetic fluency is obstructed always just in time to avoid the monotony of fine rhetoric.

Getting back to our hickory-nuts, the flavor of age in the essays is not an archaic effluence; but rather an exhalation of maturity universal in its appeal and merely condensed and enriched by time. Montaigne was forty-seven when he began to publish his writings; he had been in no sweat to see his name in print; the nuts gathered here and yonder had been wisely assorted, carefully sunned and securely stored, so that not one of them all could ever rot. Even the squirrels knew that he was right; green nuts will not keep. If I might moralize at this point, for a single breath, I should say that young essayists need not apply for credentials; it is the ripe mind, not the clever one, out of which really good essays fall like the best fruits—few and late. Your brisk youngling comes to his task with his mind full enough; but his output is sappy and rudimentary to a degree and soon perishes.

I found that the child cracking the old nuts did not care for them beyond the exercise of breaking their shells and feeding me with the wrinkled kernels; and to the average young person what can be dryer and less to the taste than one of Montaigne's best pages? A full-grown mind, a critical attitude and the elbow room of leisure, learning and worldly experience go into a good essay and the same are required to enjoy it.

There is an engaging country-house liberality in Montaigne's style which belongs to a provincial life. In the Southern homes I find his essays more frequently than in those of the North. This may be due in part to a wide sprinkling of French families; but I regard it as the result of

leisure and isolation, a sympathetic touch with Montaigne's spirit; for, in the Gulf states especially, a great majority of the educated people have always lived far from cities and have kept the horizon of the past clearly in view. They, for a wonder, have not written essays; but they have lived them in matchless style and enjoyed reading the oldest and best.

In the south-eastern corner of Tennessee, deep among the hills and many miles from railroad or town, I spent a while with a droll yet highly educated man who lived like a medieval baron. His castle, or chateau, call it what you may, was built of logs; but it was spacious, many roomed, with huge fire-places and high ceilings. A village of negro cabins straggled around it, and on both sides of a lovely little river lay the plantation two miles long. Well, there was Montaigne for you and a scholarly disciple to take care of him and give you fireside lectures on him.

It makes a difference; it is worth ten years of urban life to have a fortnight in an isolated and delightfully belated country house where there is an old-time library warmed as only a mammoth-jawed fire-place can do it, and where the host is unaware of any limits to hospitality. I remember one evening, my mountain lord was reading aloud to me; the doors were open; something hot was simmering by the fire; and in came three big shaggy dogs to keep us company. You have a perfect right to your own taste; yet to me that is the ideal way of enjoying Montaigne. The environment seems to give just that aerial illusion with which we can cheat three centuries out of their stealings.

If writing essays is a lost art, reading them, in the true light and atmosphere of a contented mind and an unambitious leisure, is also a forgotten luxury. We have critics to spare, humorists of every grade, sprightly conjurers, with the latest tricks of phrase and fancy at their quill-ends; but where is our essayist and who is his reader? Whose pen is it that

shall first once more take the ambling, digressive gait of a browsing goat straying along a fell, go in and out of a subject and all about through the neighborhood of it, as Montaigne's goose-feather did? The hand wielding that good old quill must not belong to a man who has "an appetite that could eat the solar system like a cake," as Emerson's fine exaggeration puts it; but rather to one careful of his diet and well content with what befalls "between the largest promise of ideal power and the shabby experience" of a retired and somewhat bourgeois existence.

The thin little French phrase, *fin de siècle*, expresses what we are living and what we are wearing out in the latest ways of telling; but the return to nature, which is the reversion to true art, and that only, can bring back the essay. Men are plenty who have a fine gift of formulating what they know; who since Montaigne has possessed the faculty, highest and rarest, of charming the world with what he did not know? *Que sais-je?*

MAURICE THOMPSON.

LITTLE LYRICS OF JOY—V

WORD of the vasty tent of heaven,
 Who hast to thy saints and sages given
 A thousand nights with their thousand stars,
 And the star of faith for a thousand years,

 Grant me only a foolish rover,
 All thy beautiful wide world over,
 A thousand loves in a thousand days,
 And one great love for a thousand years.

BLISS CARMAN.



PORTAIT OF C. U. P.

GARDNER C. TEALL.

NOTES

RECENT newspapers have brought the information that the authorities of the British Museum have withdrawn from circulation all books written by Mr. Oscar Wilde. For this performance there has been applause on all sides. It has been hailed as a most righteous judgment and a noble act of justice. Preachers have approved, moralists have commended, the Prevention of Vice people have been loud in their praises and now the critics also come in with their cheers. For most of these there is the old excuse of utter and growling ignorance and on that score one must—we suppose—forgive them. In the present instance, however, it is cowardly and small. They have struck a man when he is down. They have kicked a body when life was nearly gone and they found pleasure in doing it—they—the erudite, the honest, the just critics.

As to certain criminal proceedings not long past, fortunately there can be but one opinion. But that Mr. Wilde may be guilty of all immoralities conceivable and inconceivable is neither here nor there. It is not the man but his work of which there is question. And sad precedent—in the lives of Poe and Byron and Shelley—has lead us to see the necessity of disassociating a man from his work. In truth much of Mr. Wilde's writing is immoral. The evidence of immorality is not to be found in the records of any court of justice, however, but in the books themselves. "The Picture of Dorian Grey," "The Sphinx," and "Salome" are bad books. If the curators of the British Museum have failed in time past to see this it adds only to a belief in their stupidity. On the other hand the "Poems," "The House of Pomegranates," "The Happy Prince and Other Tales" are pure and charming. No man in our generation has

written better fairy tales. These also the authorities have withdrawn from circulation.

If there ever was in any of Mr. Wilde's writings literary merit and beauty, which may perhaps originally have lead the Museum to purchase the works, the same merit and beauty still exist and will continue to exist. Once and for all, a book printed and given to the public has a life wholly its own and independent of the fortunes of its author. Even should we discover that Shakspeare himself had committed sins against a dozen decalogues, it would not alter by one hair's breadth the wonder of his poetry. This is a far cry, but the question is one of principle and justice and not of the values at stake. The performance of the curators of the British Museum is an act of bigoted and blind fury. It is narrow-minded and indiscriminating. One must protest.

¶ One may dispense with gifts rather than with generosity.

¶ An admirer of William Watson asked, at a circulating library, in the suburbs of London, for "The Eloping Angels." "We haven't it in, just now," was the librarian's answer; "but we have the sequel to it, 'The Heavenly Twins.'"

¶ It is not the savage alone who seems to think a wound to the spirit can be redressed by a blow on the body.

¶ I have been reading George Moore's "Confessions of a Young Man." They lack the genuineness that makes the "Confessions" of Jean Jacques Rousseau shamefully immortal. Mr. Moore chooses to pose as a night-owl, dissipated and unscrupulous; while, in point of fact, he is a hard-working and very pains-taking author, and leads a quiet and fairly exemplary life.

In his "Confessions" Mr. Moore has a good deal to say about his contemporaries. He calls such plays as "In the Ranks," and "Harbour Lights," "sinks of literary infamy." He speaks of our own Howells as "a sort of Ashby Sterry, done into very neat prose." "Henry James," he says, "went to France and read Turgenieff. W. D. Howells staid at home and read Henry James."

He declares that he knows no book more tedious than "The Tragic Commediants;" and he thinks that "Mr. George Meredith's conception of life is crooked, ill-balanced, and out of tune."

Mr. Thomas Hardy's writings, he declares, "read like a report—a conscientious, well-done report, executed by a thoroughly efficient writer, sent down by one of the daily papers." He maintains that "Rider Haggard's literary atrocities are more atrocious than the slaughters he describes." In short, he hits out right and left at the living, and keeps all his praises—like funeral wreaths—for the dead.

¶ A man is known by the provincialisms he keeps.

¶ One thing has especially interested me, and that is to discover by how long time M. Stéphane Mallarmé antedated Maeterlinck in certain effects of what I can only call accentuated repetition. For instance, in one of Mallarmé's prose-poems, called "Forgotten Pages," a man is talking to the woman he loves. At the end of the first paragraph he says, (thus beginning the symbolic refrain,)—"Singular shadows hang about the worn-out panes." At the end of the second paragraph, the refrain gathers emphasis—"I see the spiders' webs above the lofty windows." At the end of the third—"Dream not of the spiders' webs that tremble above the lofty windows." And at the end of the impressionist sketch, we read—"Thou art abstracted. *The spiders'*

webs are shivering above the lofty windows." This prose-poem, by Mallarmé, was written many a year ago. It was one of the earliest departures in the New Symbolism.

¶ Talking of Symbolism, Mrs. Fiske-Warren, of Boston, has a brief drama, in two scenes, in the French "*Mercury*," for December, 1894—which is mystical enough for Maeterlinck himself, and exquisite enough to add to her various successes. It is entitled "*Un Jardin*," and, in this Garden, fair maidens plant the red roses of love and life, and gather, at last, the passion-flowers of suffering and triumph.

¶ No man is a hero to his valet, and perhaps no poet to his baker. Witness an anecdote I have just heard of Swinburne. He lives at Putney; and almost every day he walks a few miles to Wimbledon, and goes to a cake shop there, where he buys cakes to give to a little group of poor children, who have learned to look forward to this frequent treat. Some one, who knew the poet by sight, said to the shop-keeper—"Do you know who this gentleman who buys so many cakes of you is?"

"Oh, he's a poor gentleman who isn't quite right in his head. He's always buying cakes for the children."

¶ The last volume of poems, by Lewis Morris—"Songs Without Notes"—did not receive from the London press quite the amount of attention to which the author thought it was entitled. Rumor says that one day Mr. Morris met a Late Wit, and took occasion to confide to him his discontent. "I suppose they think if they say much about the book it will lead to more talk about me for Poet Laureate," said the author of "*The Epic of Hades*," in a tone of self-pity—"but, really, it is not fair. It is an actual Conspiracy of Silence. What would you do about it?" "Join it," was the reply, "my dear fellow, join it."

¶Sad as are the vagaries of the artistic and degenerate impulse, described and annihilated by the imperial Nordau, there is another manifestation—unmentioned by him—which is infinitely sadder. It is the madness of verse-writing which seizes on respectable women, domestic, elderly, with a tendency towards families and corpulency. From all over the country springs a yearly increasing flood of tuneful inanities, guiltless of form or meaning. The energy expended is tremendous and—to what end? Dear women they are; good women, and the lawful prey of Mr. Charles Wells Moulton and his "Magazine of Poetry." There their pitiful maunderings appear and their portraits—reproduced in half-tone. The combination is of tragic import. It defies the very laws of evolution. The unfittest intend to survive with the help of Mr. Moulton's magazine and the volumes issuing from the press of the Sons of Putnam. The light of mediocrity is not hid under a bushel, but shines far and clear, and some luckless wayfarers may come to be guided by it. Beware!

¶The critic's motto seems to be—Let the heavens fall, though justice be done.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

EVE'S RANSOM: By GEORGE GISSING. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

THE WAYS OF YALE: By HENRY A. BEERS. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

THE SILENCE OF THE MAHARAJAH: By MARIE CORELLI. The Merriam Co.

A COUNTRY SWEETHEART: By DORA RUSSELL. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co.

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